

Dear Reps. McGee and Smith, Sens. Lopes and Anwar, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Noël Grisanti and I am a resident of Hartford. I am testifying in support of Connecticut H.B. 6531 - An Act Concerning the Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings and H.B. 6528 - An Act Concerning the Sealing of Eviction Records.

Two weekends ago, I was in the snow up on Earle Street protesting the eviction of a family with young children into blizzard conditions. Evictions are traumatic and destabilizing under any circumstances, but the global pandemic has thrown the precarious positions of all tenants into stark relief. Once the eviction moratorium expires, more than 45,000 Connecticut residents expect to face eviction. Most will not have access to a lawyer, and the time to prevent this is now.

These bills come with a moral imperative. Shelter is a core human need, along with food and water. The tenant-landlord relationship is one of inherent power imbalance, because, while a landlord may lose income from a tenant's failure to pay rent, the tenant will lose a core necessity of human life if evicted. The least we can do as a government and society is ensure that tenants can have guaranteed access to legal representation should evictions occur.

These bills also make sense from an economic perspective. As Matthew Desmond writes in *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*: "Eviction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty." In order to promote the well-being of our state, we should commit ourselves to supporting the economic self-sufficiency of all residents, which means looking to interrupt the cycle of poverty perpetuated by evictions. Furthermore, Right to counsel saves money, with a return on investment ranging from 2:1 to 12:1 in savings from shelters, emergency services, homelessness prevention, and more.

I strongly support H.B. 6531 and H.B. 6528 and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the Housing Committee.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Noël Grisanti

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